

2007 FASHION ISSUE

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BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS

THREE UP-AND-COMING LOCAL DESIGNERS FOCUS ON FASHION AT RUNUP TO THE RUNWAY

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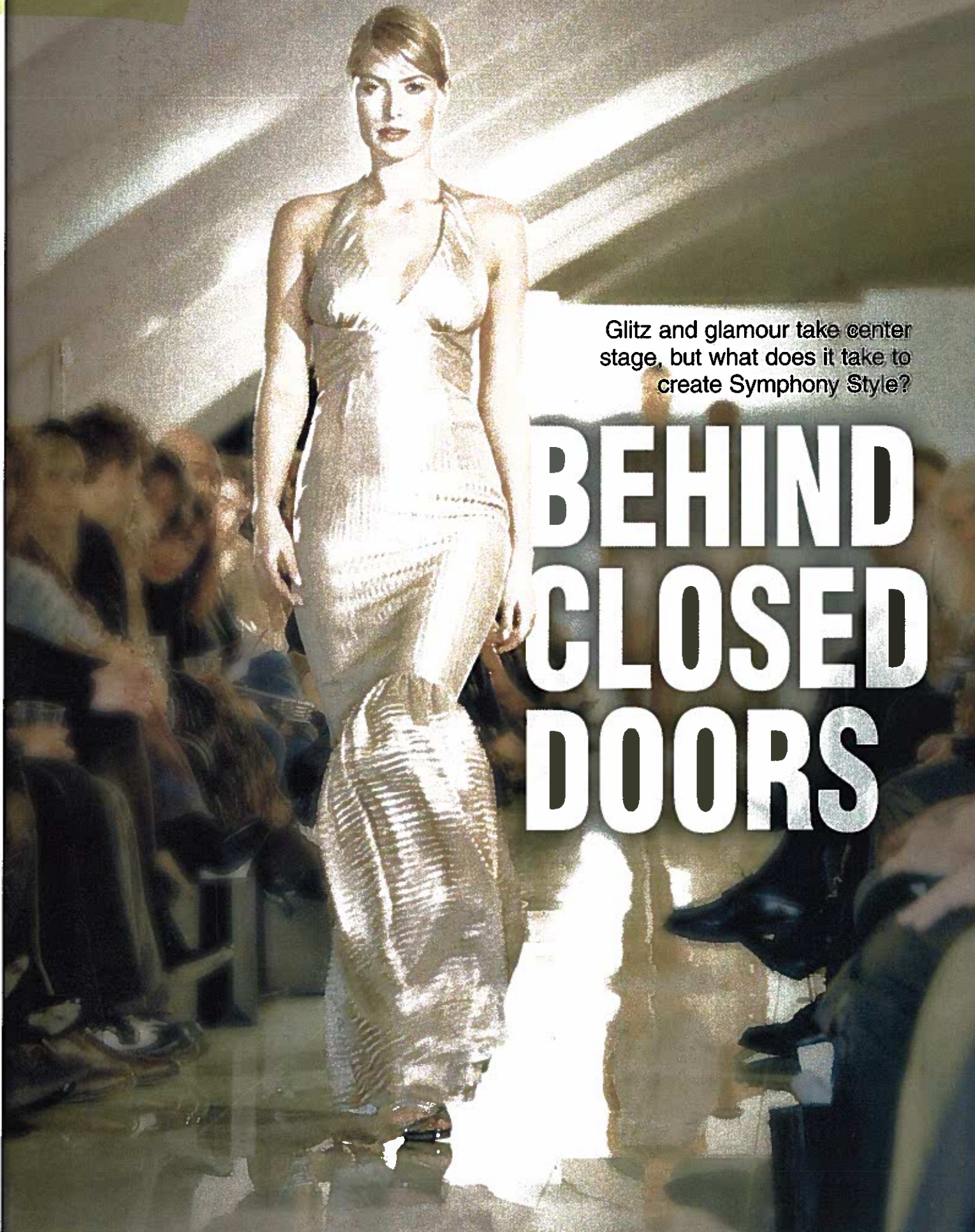


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Glitz and glamour take center stage, but what does it take to create Symphony Style?

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS



Models, fashion and trend-setters — they're what comes to mind when thinking of a professional fashion show. But have you ever stopped to think about what it takes to create such posh perfection? M got to the nitty-gritty of the 2006 Symphony Style Show, and is giving you an all-access pass to what happens leading up to this fashionable event where the who's who of Milwaukee go to see and be seen.

THE EVENT

Milwaukee's arts scene is always looking for a little help from its friends, and the highly regarded Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra is no exception.

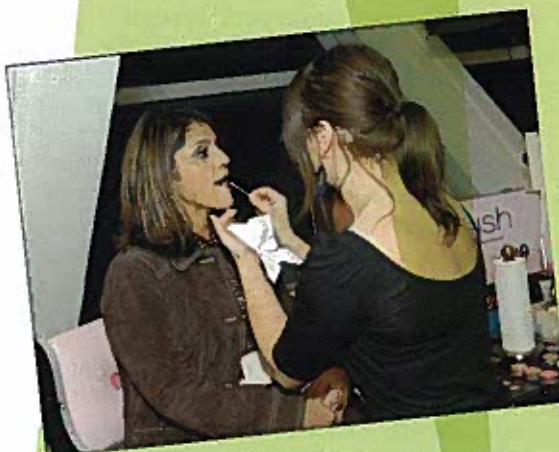
Since 1965, the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra League has organized a fall fashion show dedicated solely to fund-raising for the MSO — Symphony Style, the only truly New York-style couture fashion show in Wisconsin.

"At its core, Symphony Style's goal is to support our Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra," says Tony Chakonas, who shares chairperson duties with Kyle Cherek, Cynthia Stoll, Matthew Bushey and Patti Hutter. "But its reach is much greater as it's a collaboration and celebration of various art forms and organizations bringing together local creative talent, fashion, music and art. The world is finally seeing Milwaukee as a world-class city with Symphony Style being a perfect reflection of our city's past, present and future."

The evening is an event in and of itself even before the runway show begins, with a silent auction, cocktails, fabulous food and salon and spa mini-treatments available for guests. After cocktailing, networking and pampering, the attendees prepare for the main event.

This is no small-town fashion show. Past designers have included fashion giants such as Oscar de la Renta, Escada, Geoffrey Beene, Carolina Herrera, Vera Wang and Zang Toi. This year, the Nov. 8 event at the Milwaukee Art Museum will present the Spring 2008 designs of Peter Som for the House of Bill Blass will grace the sleek runway.

All proceeds from the show and correlating events support the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. But the impact of the show extends further into the community, with local design students from Mount Mary College, UW-Madison and Milwaukee Institute of Art



& Design learning in person from leaders in the burgeoning fashion industry.

THE PLAN

So, what goes into planning an event such as this? Crucial choices — such as who will be the next year's designer, how to raise the necessary underwriting to produce such a major event, how to keep guests happy and the event fresh, what food and beverages will be served and countless other details are all made by a core volunteer committee of about 11 people from all walks of life.

Chakonas says working for Symphony Style each year pays off in numerous ways.

"This is an extremely challenging project. Many of us have been working on this for years and we have built great relationships," says Chakonas. "We're always welcoming new volunteers, as well. It's a great opportunity to put our business and creative talents to work for an institution we believe deeply in. "As volunteers, typically we're subjected to the same old gala-formula fund-raisers," says Chakonas. "At the MSO League, we're fortunate to be a part of many events that encourage creativity, in particular, Symphony Style, which consistently exceeds the expectations of even the most jaded fashionistas and

internationally known designers. They come to Milwaukee and leave highly impressed."

In addition to coordinating the main event, volunteers plan smaller events preceding the fashion show, which not only help raise more money but also give the MSO well-placed exposure. Long before the models have been booked and the champagne put on ice, the city starts to swirl with anticipation.

Starting in June, volunteers coordinate a kick-off party, committee trip to Fashion Week in New York, RunUp to the Runway and numerous functions between. This year, the InterContinental Milwaukee hotel played host to M Magazine's City Release Party and Run-up to the Runway Kick-Off party in July.

The planning process may sound glamorous, but unseen to the attendees are long meetings that can roll over into the evenings, weekend photo shoots, constant phone calls and more. In addition to finding sponsors, corporate

partners and auction donations, volunteers sell, coordinate and produce the Symphony Style Book, which is released on the day of the show. Glossy pages reveal the best of Milwaukee. From start to finish, the volunteer committee drives the entire creative process from conceptualizing the ads, arranging hair, makeup and wardrobe, shooting original photography, writing, designing, editing, printing and delivering the Book to guests and advertisers throughout the city. And their work pays off — the 2006 edition of the Symphony Style publication was nationally recognized at the League of American Symphony Orchestras conference.

THE BIG NIGHT

On the eve of the show, things start to heat up at the Milwaukee Art Museum. Models from all over the Midwest descend on Milwaukee, represented by the Ford and Elite agencies, for a chance to audition for one of the fashion industry's top designers. Expert crews begin to assemble lighting along the expanse of the 100-foot runway, along with a state-of-the-art sound system. They're usually working until well past

midnight. Volunteers unload supplies and auction items into storage for next day set up.

Selected models arrive in the morning of the show for wardrobe fittings and practice struts down the runway, while sound and lighting are checked. The models are directed to hair and makeup, where the hairspray is thick and the eyelashes long. Final fittings are performed by seamstresses with pins in their teeth who nip and tuck miniscule sections of fabric onto tiny bodies, ensuring no wardrobe malfunctions take place.

Following model selection and fittings, the designer and his staff proceed to the Lubar Auditorium, where he or she conducts a personal question-and-answer session with the eager local design students. It's a rare opportunity to speak with the designer personally and get a glimpse of the world the students are trying so hard to enter.

As the afternoon unfolds, chairs and tables begin to line the runway. The main lobby is transformed from Calatrava's decidedly open, clean and sleek space to a labyrinth of draped tables and booths. Frantic phone calls are made, heads are scratched and curse words are uttered. It is, in fact, all the

drama one would expect.

Meanwhile, volunteers rapidly piece together gift bags stuffed with Bumble and bumble, hair products, spa gift certificates and, naturally, the Symphony Style book, giving the soon-to-arrive guests some sweet swag event memorabilia.

In the meantime, catering and bartenders arrive. A DJ sets up a turntable in the VIP room, and a final sweep and mop is swished across the front entrance.


Volunteers dot the landscape as they place name cards on seats, check and recheck the itinerary, set out the champagne in ice buckets. The designer and the Symphony Style crew are ready to greet guests.



A quiet calm stirs this space — a brief moment of clarity amidst the organized chaos of the day. There's nothing more to do.

A limousine pulls up out front; the first guests arrive.

100 or so volunteers take their places actors on a stage.

It's go-time.

For more information about Symphony Style '07, check out www.symphonystyle.org. 



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